1; Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

The next day the cooking preparations proceed in earnest. Over a hundred women gather at Ponatlege and the adjoining hamlet to prepare the taro. The men are busy wrapping the fish in leaves and tending to the *liga*. The only idlers are a few old men, some of whom sit and play with the babies, while others are chatting in the men's house. The food is left on the *liga* overnight, and the next day sees the climax of the *malanggan* rites.

By the middle of the morning all the people of Lesu, Ambwa, and Langania, and many from the more distant villages of Libba and Tandis, and even a few from Fakmalak and Laummasong, both of different language groups, arrive at Ponatlege. Five or six hundred people are present. The men and women sit around in a large open space in the centre of the hamlet left free for dancing. The men sit on the side nearest the enclosure and the men's house, while the women are on the other side; even quite young children observe this distinction. On the side where the women sit a small temporary booth is erected to hold baked taro and bananas. This is for the women who, if they are hungry between dances, go in and eat. The men do not eat any of this food, but wait until the rites are over for the day. Everyone is anxious for the dancing to begin.

In come the first group of dancers, who are from Lesu. Each man wears an elaborate mask, a grass or rather leaf petticoat, and a red shirt. In the past, instead of the red shirt, which he now buys especially for this occasion from the trade store on a near-by plantation, he painted his body red from the waist up so that his identity might remain concealed. As each dancer enters, an old man blows from his hand some powdered lime, *lest*, in front of the performer, to make him dance well. The dancers enter in couples, except the first man who acts as a leader, escorting in each pair of dancers. When all have appeared, they dance together in circle and line formation. The dance is a very strenuous

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A few boys and men (six of them) are allowed to come in during the night and watch them, for which privilege they pay *tsera* and tobacco to Sola and Mekeo. The observers must eat some of the fat from the pigs which have been killed for the feast to be held in the morning. This is a ritual duty, and the fat is not eaten because they like it. Sometimes a man who cannot stomach the fat will merely lick it with his tongue. No native explanation for this custom exists, but it is believed that some misfortune would befall the man who had neglected to eat the fat: he might cut himself while felling a tree, or fall from a tree and die. No one else sees these *Pundän*, and after the rites they are destroyed, even before the *malanggans*.

The next morning about a hundred men gather in the enclosure at Ponatlege. The two *Pundän* are out of sight in the separate little enclosure behind the *malanggan* house, in front of which the food is piled—two pigs, baked taro, bananas, and a species of chestnut (*koh*). Sola stands up and talks: "These two pigs belong to the concluding rites for the *malanggan*. We have made big rites for them. All the men and all the women ate pigs. Now to-day we, the men, but not the women, will eat pigs. Why have not all the men from Langania come? All the men from Lesu and Ambwa are here. The Langania men did not come because they are lazy." Sola now gives *tsera* to one man in payment for the pig. He has contributed the other one himself. The food is distributed according to traditional custom. After this Sola comes out adorned with a feather headdress, a bright red loin-cloth, a pig's liver hanging out of his mouth, the shark fishing rattle in one hand, and a smaller shell rattle in the other. *Kerapo* leaves are stuck in his armband. Thus arrayed, he dances up and down the centre of the enclosure and sings, or rather hums a wordless song. This performance is called *baeas*.

When the men have eaten there are speech by the old